# Bakunin on trial

The ghost of Bakunin appears in a Chinese courtroom to haunt bureaucratic Maoism! The incident described below occurred in the aftermath of the Chinese 'Cultural Revolution'. The power battles between opposing factions of the ruling bureaucratic elite in Maoist China set in motion great upheavals and mobilizations of students and workers that sometimes went further than either ruling faction intended, as can be seen below.

(From Anarchist Black Cross Bulletin], No. 7; Chicago, January, 1974. Also reprinted in the 'Class Struggles in China' pamphlet, Charlatan Stew, New York, 1976)

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**Bakunin On Trial**

During the months of September and October, 1973, so-called trials took place in six different cities in China, where up to 300 workers were charged with "aggravated hooliganism" ... The offence with which these workers were charged was simply that they endeavoured to get control of the workers' committees running their factories. Ostensibly, these committees are elected by popular vote, in practice they are appointed by the Government and then seek popular approval... During the recent "elections" many workers, especially in the textile industry, made the mistake of assuming that they could use the process of choosing the factory committees to establish what they thought would be "real" workers control...

In the October trial in Shanghai, the presentation of the case against the "wreckers" took on aspects of farce. It was apparently decided by the prosecution that what the accused had done could be given the dreaded label of "anarcho-syndicalist deviationism". The accused were, therefore, lectured with Marxist-Leninist admonitions about the dangers of anarcho-syndicalism, which seduces workers into presuming they can actually take over control of the factories where they work.

In an excited atmosphere, the prosecutor, a former supporter of Lui Shao-chi, now determined to show how loyal he was to Mao Tse-tung, read out Marx's denunciations of Bakunin to shouts of angry protest at the villainous enemy of the state, which developed into sustained applause when Marx stated how inadequate "Russian blood" was in making the revolution. Apparently Bakunin's worst fault was being a Russian - though worse was to come when his writings were read, to prolonged laughter and derision, culminating in the inevitable "confession" - this is the confession made by Bakunin to the Tsar during his 12 years of imprisonment, as a plea for his release from the dungeons of Tsarist Russia]. One of the communist cheerleaders present - hearing the attacks on Ba-Ku-Nin and assuming (not unnaturally) that he was one of the people who had tried to take over the textile factory in Shanghai - shouted at this point, "Jail is too good for such a scoundrel! Hang him!"

A lengthy account of the trials was published in a pamphlet titled Thus Far. It was translated into many languages and prepared for foreign distribution. It explained clearly and simply how far workers are allowed to go towards workers' control. It showed when such participation in management ceases to be permissible. Copies were sent all over the world. But the first reaction of Maoists everywhere was fear that this would disgrace them in the eyes of workers everywhere who think workers' control means what it says. So the pamphlet has been withdrawn.

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